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THE KING'S QUAIR.

THE
“KINGIS QUAIR,”

BY

KING JAMES I. OF SCOTLAND.

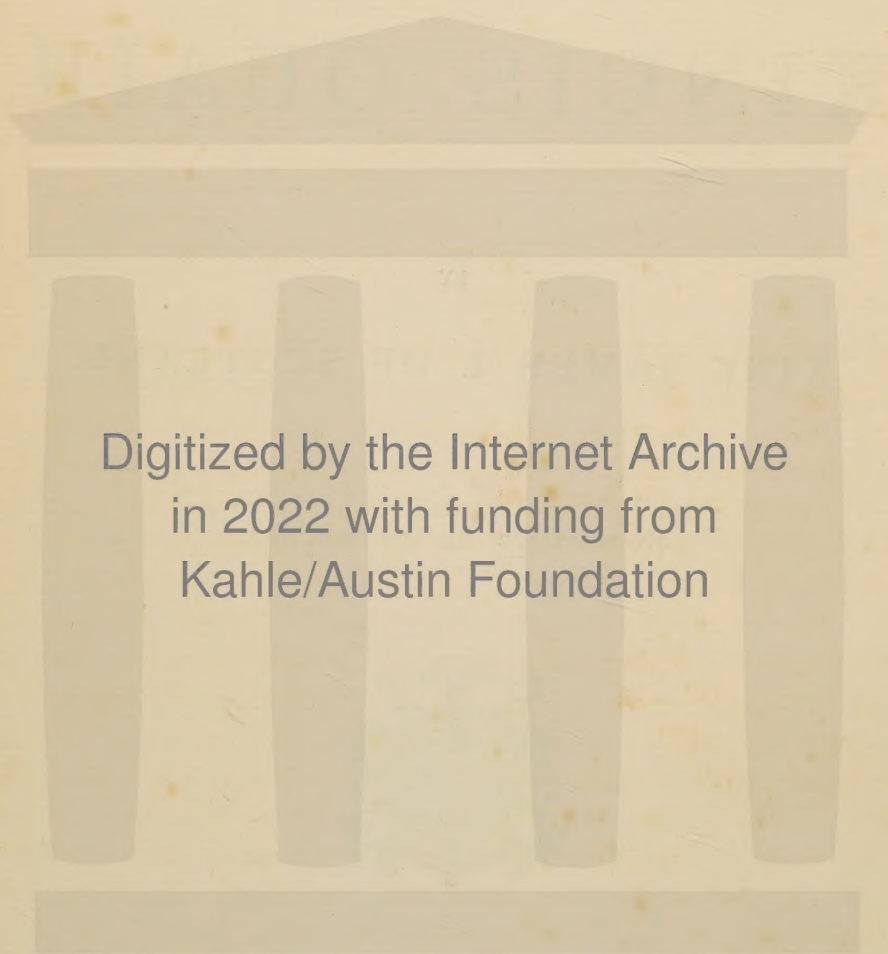
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ALEXANDER GARDNER,
12 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON; AND PAISLEY.

1886.





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INTRODUCTION.

JAMES FIRST OF SCOTLAND, author of "THE KING'S QUAIR," was born in the year 1394. He was the son of Robert III., the second of the Stewart line. Robert's eldest son, David, was considerably older than James. He was created Duke of Rothesay, being the first who bore the title of duke in Scotland. On the same occasion the King's brother was made Duke of Albany. King Robert was a retiring man, taking little trouble in State affairs. It was otherwise with his brother Albany, who, both before and after the King's death, ruled Scotland almost single handed. The Parliament which sanctioned the creation of the two dukedoms enacted that Rothesay should be Regent for a term of three years, to be extended if necessary. This arrangement was made in consequence of the King's infirm health. The young Regent was somewhat of a scapegrace, and not very scrupulous regarding the application of the State finances. Nevertheless he seems to have been a favourite with the people. His uncle Albany was an ambitious man, and would fain have been king himself, but Robert and his two sons stood between him and his desires. He believed in the proverb, which was old even in his day, "where there is a will there is a way," and he left no device untried to further his purpose. One of his plans was to poison the mind of the King regarding the public and private conduct of Rothesay. Ultimately, Robert believed in the misconduct of his son and gave consent to have him put under restraint. The uncle was wily enough to obtain the King's signature in the matter, so as to save himself should after enquiries prove inconvenient. Shortly after, Rothesay, in one of his rollicking adven-

tures was making his way to take possession of the Castle of St. Andrews, which under some plea he claimed, when he was intercepted and conveyed to Falkland Palace. He was there cast into a dungeon and, during fifteen days, cruelly starved to death. No male heir was now left between Albany and the crown but his young nephew, James. The secret murder of the fast but, in many ways, lovable, Rothesay, was perpetrated in the year 1402, and his uncle, Albany, got himself at once installed in the regency as had been settled previously by Parliament. Meanwhile the King got alarmed at the prospect of the direct succession being put in hazard by the high handed rule pursued by Albany. The Duke, active, plotting and unscrupulous, was master over the timid mind of the King, who feared rather than respected his brother. In 1405, when James was over ten years of age, his father determined to send him to France for his education and safety. He set sail in March of that year, but while on his voyage, his ship was attacked by a squadron of English cruisers and he and his company carried prisoners to London, and cast into the Tower. It is conjectured that information was conveyed to the English Government by Albany, and at his instigation the unlawful act committed. The seizure was made at a time when the two nations were at peace. But the temptation was great. It was no small advantage to King Henry IV. to have the heir of the Scottish throne in his keeping, as he might by that means so far shape the relations between France and Scotland. James was detained a prisoner for the long period of nineteen years. Not till the death of Henry V. did he obtain his liberation under the milder rule of the Duke of Gloucester, who was appointed Regent at Henry's death. While captive, James was detained in several strongholds. For a few years, the Tower was the place of his detention. Then he was six years in Nottingham Castle; again in the Tower, and finally in Windsor Castle. On April 4th, 1409, a year after the Prince's capture, his father died at Dundonald Castle in Ayrshire, and was buried in Paisley Abbey in front of the high altar. The old man grieved himself to death for the loss of his son. Thus during eighteen years of his captivity James was legally King of Scotland.

The English Kings who reigned during his detention—Henry IV. and V.—did not neglect to give him the best education the times afforded. Between the Earl of Orkney, who was captured with him, and Sir John Pelham, one of the most accomplished knights of the age, James's classical and athletic education was brought to a high point. Although his security was looked to sharply, out door exercises were liberally allowed him. It may be supposed the forests around Nottingham gave him ample scope for hunting the stag and spearing the wild boar. However, in the later years of his detention at Windsor he describes his confinement as being very close. He speaks of leaning his head on the cold stone wall and viewing through the bars of his window the gardens by day and the stars by night. There seems no reason to doubt that so long as Henry V. lived, James had ample liberty, so far as his security would permit. He attended Henry in his French wars, although for a questionable purpose on Henry's part. He accompanied Henry's body to England, and acted as chief mourner at his funeral in Westminster Abbey. The Regency, feeling its weakness in absence of the great conqueror, and not knowing what complications might arise with France, thought it as well in the meantime to put James, as he says in the "Quair," in "strayte ward;" and so he was conducted to Windsor Castle. It was while in durance there that he saw the Lady Johanna Beaufort, daughter of the Earl of Somerset, walking under his window. The Earl was half brother to Henry IV., his wife being Duchess of Clarence, niece to Richard II. Johanna, whom James ultimately married, was thus closely related to the throne by both parents. To the attractions of this Princess is owed the production of the "King's Quair." In it James tells his own story. He describes himself as listlessly leaning his head on the cold stone wall, and looking through the barred window, "thinking of this and that," when he espied the young lady walking in the garden below. The reader may be left to learn in the poem what were the King's feelings on the occasion. How it came about that his love was reciprocated the poem does not relate, but there must have been a convenient go-between. As James was detained in

Windsor a considerable time, it would become known that a captive of rank was immured somewhere about, and female curiosity would find a ready means of getting a glimpse of imprisoned royalty. Although the poem does not advert to any means having been used by the lady (James was too gallant to mention such though she had), it is traditional that she got conveyed to him certain tokens of her consideration. As James makes no secret of his passion, he would soon find means to get arrangements made for an introduction. Certain it is, they were shortly afterwards married in the Church of St. Mary Overie, now St. Saviour's, Southwark. Their marriage feast was held in the palace of the Princess's uncle, Cardinal Beaufort, a churchman of great wealth and ambition. James was promised a fortune of £10,000 with his young Queen, but when he expected to get cash in hand, he was told that £40,000 had been spent on his maintenance and education which he must find security to pay before he could be allowed to depart for Scotland. However, in consideration of his marriage, a deduction would be made of £10,000. and his obligation thus reduced to £30,000. This was rather sharp practice, but James, being helpless, had to submit. Besides being sharp practice it was rather unfair, as only £700 per annum had been spent on him. Taking his captivity at nineteen years, the whole sum expended on James by the English Government was somewhere about £13,300. By this, it appears his gaolers did not intend to be losers by his detention, whatever he himself lost by missed opportunities. No doubt the expensive wars of the late King had brought the public exchequer to a low ebb, which, to some extent, may account for the hard terms put upon James. He gave ample securities, however, both personal and material. Several of the Scottish burghs gave bonds. It has been asserted that the ransom never was paid, and so matters were squared to the satisfaction of third parties. The grounds for this statement cannot well be sustained, as the Scots Parliament levied certain duties for the special purpose of paying the ransom, or, as the English Government persisted in calling it, the claim for James's maintenance. The first year's levy returned £9333. 6s. 8d. The second year did not yield so much, and the King, see-

ing the general dissatisfaction at the tax, ordered its discontinuance, and took the matter into his own hands ; the royal revenues being drawn upon for the remainder. If James did not get the promised £10,000, he got in its stead an able wife who proved a faithful helpmate till his cruel murder thirteen years after. The King and his young Queen, after a reasonable honeymoon, set off for Scotland accompanied by a numerous cavalcade and were without delay crowned at Scone, as use was, in 1424.

During James's captivity, Scotland was governed by his uncle, the Duke of Albany till his death in 1419, and then by his cousin, the second Duke. James was fully imbued with the conviction that the Albany family purposely prevented his release, so that the crown might by some chance fall to themselves. In this conviction it is generally conceded he was right so far at least as his uncle was concerned. The elder Albany was one of the cleverest men in the nation, and if he caused Rothesay's death, we must recollect that short-shrift-and-quick-despatch was the fashionable mode of the period in dealing with those who stood in the way of another's advancement. It is a curious fact that, although this personage has a suspicious name in history, nothing positive can be brought against his fair fame. His alleged complicity in Rothesay's death is only on the ground of strong suspicion, and what has been written of him by a contemporary is all in his favour ; at least the writer intended it for such. Prior Winton says of Albany :—

“ He was a seemly fair persón
And had of virtues high renoun,
Was fair and pleasant in youthhood,
Stout and brave in ripe manhood,
In his time in all Scotlánd
More wise than he was not livánd.
He was of high and fair staturé,
He loved and honoured his creatór,
At God's service and at the mass
At all times right devout he was.
He was a constant Catholic,
All Lollard he hated and heretic ;

living

He eat and drank but soberly,
 At all times fed himself fairly ;
 To lords a mirror clean was he
 Of honour and of honesty,
 By virtuous conduct, fair having, behaviour
 Resembled he a mighty king.
 Ye Bishops, Abbots, and Prelâtes,
 Through him ye well enjoy your states,
 In churches then at your altars
 Ye spend for him devout prayérs.
 All churchmen of lower degrees
 Ye bow to God for him your knees ;
 He was to you in general
 Leal, loving, and right special."

The devout Prior has many more good things to say of Albany, not the least of which is his consideration for the poor. But no doubt, in the spirit of the age, he admired him most as *hating all Lollards and heretics*, which virtue he put in action by burning an Englishman who came to Scotland preaching the original doctrine. James did not exactly coincide with Wynton's good opinion, but he gave no indication of displeasure against either his uncle or his cousin, who gave up the reins of government on the King's arrival. He was only restraining his wrath, however, against the Albany family and maturing his plans to bring them to account. This he accomplished while they and certain of their supporters were attending the King's first Parliament. The Duke, his two sons, and some others, were without delay arrested, tried for high treason and hurried to the block at the Heading Hill outside Stirling Castle. Thus, at a swoop, was sent out of existence a family who had governed Scotland for a quarter of a century.

James was a vigorous ruler. He introduced many reforms ; the principal of which was the resuming for the country the national lands, which, in his absence, the nobility had appropriated to their private purposes. The rectification of the currency, which he found much depreciated, was another of his reforms. Weights and measures had also his attention. He placed legal procedure on an improved

footing, and introduced that feature, which has come down to our time, that the poor can get justice without price. Another of his reforms was the promulgation of the laws in the spoken language of the country : being thus in advance of any nation of his time. He also instituted what is said to be a want of the present day—annual Parliaments, and paid Members. But his great work was his curbing the pretensions of the nobility. They oppressed the people on all hands, and it was James's constant aim to give the people freedom and fair play. But he had one great fault, which he had imbibed with his education under the two Lancastrian Kings. These monarchs, to strengthen their hold on the throne wrested from Richard II., curried favour with the Church by persecuting the early Protestants—the Wickliffites and Lollards. During the minority of Henry VI., the Beauforts, who wielded the power of the State, and from among whom James got his Queen, followed up those persecutions. Cardinal Beaufort, the uncle of Johanna, James's wife, was a haughty prelate, and jealous of the Church's dignity. The influence of these high parties could not but tell on the actions of James in religious matters, and so we have the chief blot of his reign in the burning of Cranmer in 1432. He could have saved the martyr's life had he chosen. It is a pity he did not do so, for otherwise his reign is brilliant in Scottish history. Such of the nobility as were forced to restore their ill-gotten lands kept revenge rankling in their breasts for years, and they formed a plot to square matters with the King. James was holding his Christmas festivities at a monastery at Perth, when a band of three hundred ruffians, headed by one Graham, a kinsman of his own, burst in upon him and effected their purpose by numerous stabs through his body. Thus died the Poet-King in the forty-second year of his age, and thirteenth of his actual reign.

James was six years old when Chaucer died, and he had every opportunity of being well read in this first of English poets. The Canterbury Tales were doubtless the means of cheering many a weary hour. He lighted his own poetic flame at those of Gower and Chaucer, as he tells in his "Quair." This poem may be said to be known to few modern readers. Its antiquated language rather repels than

attracts, and only the studious can read it with anything like pleasure. Yet it is a poem worth knowing, alike for its authorship, the occasion of its production, and its early date. The "Quair" has been several times published in the course of the last hundred years, but, from the cause just mentioned, its place is more appropriate on the shelf of the collector than on the table of the general reader. No attempt has hitherto been made to present it in a guise fitting it to appear in modern company. The "King's Quair," or *Quire*, or *Book*, was written in Windsor Castle, in the year 1423, near the close of the author's captivity. It rehearses his love experiences : the lady of his affections becoming shortly after his partner for life. There is no original of the poem extant. A transcript was discovered in the archives of Oxford University, and afterwards published in 1783 by Tytler. The copy at Oxford is dated 1475, thirty-eight years subsequent to the author's death. Several editions have since been published. The latest is that by the Scottish Text Society, edited by Dr. Skeat, Professor of Anglo-Saxon, Cambridge. Dr. Skeat has gone, from sheer love of the task, thoroughly into it, and has exhausted enquiry. He has thrown light on many obscure passages, and rendered intelligible terms and idioms which had puzzled former editors.

The poem consists of 197 stanzas, of seven verses or lines, and each verse of ten syllables or five iambic feet. In each stanza there are two couplets and a triplet interwoven. The poets of James's time had a considerable license in extending certain words to suit their measure : a facility denied modern versifiers. For example, the verse :—"The long days and the nights eke," consists of seven syllables ; but in the fourteenth century, and later, it could be made into a verse of ten :—"The longē dayēs and the nightēs eke." Again, the verse :—"The sharp, green, sweet juniper," is made in the poem to read—"The sharpē greenē sweetē juniper," which scans ten syllables with proper iambic rhythm. For want of a knowledge of this rule many give up the reading of the poetry of that age as unpleasant. There are many verses in the "Quair" which even this expedient fails to mend. But we must recollect we have no original of the poem to judge by. The copyist may have made slight mis-

takes in transcribing, as the ear then appreciated rhythm as acutely as it does now. The early poets took another liberty, inadmissible in the present day, in changing the positions of the accents of certain words to suit the rhythm. Thus "confort" is sometimes accented on the first syllable, and sometimes on the second ; and "philosophy" on the second or third, as may be required. Readers of the original soon come to make these varying accents fall into their proper places. Modern versifiers, instead of lengthening words, resort to the expedient of shortening them by eliding a syllable. Such words as flower, power, may be made monosyllabic, as, *flow'r, pow'r*. Or two monosyllables may be fused into one, as, 'tis, for *it is*, or I'll, for *I will*. In only a few of the past participles can a syllable be gained. Loved may be made lovëd ; dogged, doggëd ; poached, poachëd. But it must be admitted syllables gained in this way make but limping reading. In the present version the original rhymes have been almost entirely retained. In the instances where this rule has been departed from, such modern words as have the same signification and which are fair rhymes, have been adopted. Many of the original rhymes required re-spelling merely to make them clear. It has been aimed to alter as little as possible the verbal arrangement of the poem : the spelling only being modernised. Where idioms are obscure, or modern spelling would not suit the occasion, this aim has not been carried out, but the sense in any case, it is hoped, has not been marred. In frequent cases the original forms of the rhymes are retained, re-spelling failing to explain them : nor do explanatory words exist to rhyme with them. Such words are glossed beside themselves. This plan saves the reader's mind from being distracted looking for the meanings elsewhere. In one or two instances certain sentiments have been slightly diverted to make them more acceptable to modern taste.

The short poem attached, intituled "Good Council," is the only other work of James's extant. Dr. Skeat holds the authorship to be undoubted.

THE KING'S QUAIR.

- 1 HIGH in the heavens' figure circulére firmament
 The ruddy stars were twinkling as the fire ;
And, in Aquarius, Cynthia the clear
 Rinséd her tresses like the golden wire,
 That late before, in fair and fresh attire,
Through Capricorn had heaved her horns so bright,
North northward she approachéd the midnight ; meridian
- 2 When as I lay in bed alone wáking,
 Just out of sleep a little time before,
Fell me to mind of many diverse thing,
 Of this and that ; I cannot say wherefóre,
 But by no craft on earth could I sleep more ;
For which I could devise no better wile
Than take a book to read upon a while :

- 3 Of which the name is calléd properly
Boëthius, who was its compiloûre, author
Shewing the counsel of philosophy,
Compiled by that noble senátor
Of Rome, who in his day was the world's flow'r,
And from a high estate was for a while
Condemned to poverty in sad exile :
- 4 And there to read this worthy lord and clerk,
His metre sweet full of morality ;
His florid pen so fair he set to work,
Describing first of his prosperity,
And out of that his infelicity ; misfortunes
Then how he, in poetical report, discourse
Philosophised to give himself comfórt.
- 5 My purpose was, by conning of my book,
To borrow sleep : to read then I began ;
And as I read, my mind was more to look
Upon the writing of this noble man,
That in himself the full recov'ry wan won
From poverty, misfortune, and distress,
And in them placed his very steadfastness.

- 6 And so the virtue of his youth before early virtue
 Was in old age the ground of his delights :
Fortune her back turned to him, and therefore
 It was his joy and comfort he was quits
 With all unstable earthly appetites ;
And patiently he took to his penánce, afflictions
And of his virtue made it suffisánce : to suffice
- 7 With many a noble reason, as him liked,
 Inditing in his pleasant latin tongue,
So full of fruit, rhetorically picked,
 Which to explain my head is over young ;
 Therefore I let him pass, and, in *my* tongue,
Proceed I will again to the senténcé sentiments
My matter claims, and leave all incidence. incidentals
- 8 The livelong night aye wakeful, as I said,
 My eyes began to smart with studying ;
My book I shut, and at my head it laid ;
 And down I lay without more tarrying,
 Anew this matter in my mind rolling ;
That is to say, regarding each estate,
As Fortune liketh, she will it translate. change it

9 For true it is, on her unstable wheel,
Each one of us doth clamber to his stage, position in life
And failing footing oft, when she does reel, turns the wheel
Some up, some down, is no estate or age
Insured, no more the prince is than the page :
So strangely she our lots to us divideth,
Chiefly to youth, who seldom aught provideth. pre-arrangeth

10 Among these fancies rolling to and fro,
Fell me to mind my fortune and my ure ; luck
In tender youth how she was first my foe,
Again my friend, and how I got recüre redress
Of my distress, and all my aventure experiences
I did recall, that longer sleep or rest
I could not get, my wits were all so wrest. unhinged

11 Tossing about and wakeful, thus musing,
I weary lay, and listened suddenly,
And soon I heard the bell to matins ring,
And up I rose, no longer would I lie :
And now, how trow ye ? such a fantasy
Fell to my mind, that aye methought the bell
Said to me, " tell on, man, what thee befell."

12 Thought I then to myself, "what may this be?

This is my own imaginati^on ;

It is no one who speaketh unto me ;

It is a bell, or that impressi^on

Of my thought causeth this illusi^on,

That makes me think so foolishly this wise ;"

And so befell as I shall you advise.

13 Determined to proceed in my intent,

Since I had so imagined of that soun,

sound

And in my time much ink and paper spent

To small effect, I took conclusion

Some novel thing to write ; I set me down,

And instantly my pen in hand I took,

And made a +, and thus began my book :—

14 UNHAPPY youth, of nature indigest,

immature

Unripened fruit strewed by winds variáble ;

Like to the bird that fed is in the nest,

And cannot fly ; of wit weak and unstable,

To fortune both and to misfortune hable ;

subject

Wist thou thy pains to come and thy traváil,

For dread and sorrow mightst thou weep and wail.

- 15 Thus stands thy welfare in unsteadfastness,
And lacks it that which should thee rule and gye : guide
Like to the ship that saileth rudderless
Upon the rocks and must to dangers hie,
For lack of that which should be her supply ; help
So dost thou stand exposed to this world's rage,
And wanting what should guide all thy voyage.
- 16 To my own self I partly this apply ;
Though nature gave sufficiency in youth, high birth
But intellectual ripeness wanted I,
To govern my own will : I little couth could do little
When rudderless to travail I begouth began
Among the billows of this world to drive ;
How stood the case, anon, I shall discrive. describe
- 17 With doubtful heart, amongst the rocks so blake, black
My feeble boat full fast to steer and row,
Helpless alone, the winter night I wake,
To wait the wind that forward should me throw.
O empty sail ! where is the wind should blow
Me to the port, where 'ginneth all my game ? pleasure
Help, Calliope, and wind, in Mary's name !

- 18 The rocks I call the vague prolixity
Of doubtfulness that doth my spirit pall :
The lack of wind is the difficulty
In writing clear this little treatise small :
The boat I call the matter whole of all :
The sail unto the wit that now I wind,
To seek good skill, though I but little find.
- 19 At my beginning first I name and call
On you, Clío, and on you, Polymye,
With Erato, goddesses, sisters all,
The muses nine, as books do specify ;
My wayward wits do ye direct and gye ;
And with your shining lanterns well convoy
My pen, to write my torment and my joy !
- 20 In spring, that full of virtue is and good,
When nature first begins her enterprise,
That lately was by cruel frost and flood
And showers sharp oppressed in many wise,
And Cynthia beginneth to arise
High in the east, at morning soft and sweet,
Northward his course to drive in Ariëte :

- 21 Midday had four degrees but passéd even, exactly
Of length and breadth his angel wings so bright
He spread upon the ground down from the heaven ;
That, for the joy and comfort of the sight,
And with the action of his heat and light,
The tender flowers opened out and sprad ; spread
And, in their nature, welcomed him for glad. joy
- 22 Not far beyond the age of innocence, seven
Just near about the number of years three, ten years old
Whether 't were caused through heavenly influence
Of God's intent, or other casualty,
I cannot say ; but out of my countrý,
By their advice who had of me the cure, care
By sea to pass, I took my aventure. voyage
- 23 And furnished well with all things necessary,
With wind at will, up early on the morrow,
Straight into ship, no longer would we tarry,
The way we took, the time I told to-forowe ; before
With "Farewells" many and "St. John to borowe" protect
From fellow and from friend ; with one assent
We pulled up sail, and on our way we went.

- 24 Upon the waves we weltered to and fro,
Unfortunate on that unhappy day,
In spite of us, whether we would or no,
With strong hand, as by force, in short to say,
By enemies were seized and led away
The whole of us, and brought to their countree ;
Thus fortune shaped no other way to be.
- 25 Where that in strait ward and in strong prisón,
So far forth, of my life the heavy line,
No comfort left, to sorrow abandón,
The second sister willed my fate to twine,
Near by the period of years twice nine ;
Till Jupiter his mercy did advert,
And sent me comfort to relieve my smert. affliction
- 26 Where in close ward full oft I would bewail
My deadly life, of grief full and penáncé, discomfort
Thus saying, what have I e'er done to fail to lose
My freedom in this world and my plesáncé ? happiness
Since ev'ry one has thereof suffisáncé, sufficient
That I behold, and I a sad creatúre
Deprived of this—hard is my aventúre ! fortune

- 27 The bird, the beast, the fish eke in the sea,
They live in freedom each one in its kind ;
And I a man, and lacking liberty ;
What shall I say, what reason may I find,
That fortune should do so? This in my mind,
My folk I'd argue with, but all for naught ;
None me regarded, nor my troubles rought. heeded
- 28 Then would I say, " If God had me devised
To live my life in thraldom thus and pyne, pain
What was the cause that he me more comprised
Than other folk to live in such ruïne? ruin
I stand alone among the figures nine,
A cipher merely without any speed, value
And so of others' help I stand in need."
- 29 The livelong days and nights so dreary eke
I would bewail my fortune in this wise,
For which, against distress relief to seek,
My custom was on mornings to arise
Early as day ; O happy exercise !
By which I came to joy out of tormént. unhappiness
But now to purpose of my first intent :—

30 Bewailing in my chamber thus alone,
Despairing of all joy and remedy,
A-weary of my thoughts, and woe-begone,
Unto the window did I walk in hye, haste
To see the world and people walking by,
As at the time, though I of cheering food amusement
Might have nought else, to look it did me good.

31 Now there was made fast by the tower wall
A garden fair, and in the corners set
A herbere green, with wands so long aud small
Railed all about ; and so with trees close set
Was all the place, and hawthorn hedges knit,
That no one though he were near walking by,
Might there within scarce any one espy.

32 So thick the branches and the leafage green
Beshaded all the alleys that there were,
And midst of ev'ry herbere might be seen
The sharp and green sweet scented juniper,
Growing so fair with branches here and there,
That, as it seemed to any one without,
The branches spread the herbere all about ;

33 And on the slender green leaved branches sat
The little joyous nightingales, and sang
So loud and clear, the carols consecrat
To faithful love, now soft, now loud among,
That all the walls and all the garden rang
Right of their song, and in the stanza next
Of their sweet harmony, lo ! is the text :—

Song.

34 "Come worship ye, that lovers are this May,
For of your bliss the calends are begun,
And sing with us, away, winter, away!
Come, summer, come, the season sweet and sun!
Awake for shame! that have your heavens won,
And am'rously in joy your heads lift all;
Thank Love that does you to his mercy call."

35 When they this song had sung a little thraw, time
They paused awhile, and therewith not afraid,
As I beheld and cast my eyes a-law, downwards
From bough to bough they hopped about and played,
And in bird fashion freshly they arrayed
Their plumes anew, and preened them in the sun,
And Love they thanked, that had their new mates won.

36 This was the clear plain ditty of their note,
And thereupon unto myself I thought,
“What mode of life is this, that makes birds dote?
What may this be, how cometh it of aught?
What needeth it to be so dearly bought?
It nothing is, trow I, but feignèd cheer,
That men pretend to imitate as cheer.”

37 Again I'd think ; “whatever may this be ?
That Love is of so noble might and kind,
Loving his folk, and such prosperity
Is it of him, as we in books do find ?
May he affection fasten and unbind ?
Hath he upon our hearts such mastery ?
Or all this is but feignéd fantasy !

38 For if he be of so great excellence,
That he of ev'ry one hath care and charge,
How 'gainst him have I sinned or done offence,
That I am prisoner, and birds at large,
Since him to serve he might prove my couráge ?
And if he be not so, then may I seyne,
What makes folk babble so of him in vain ?

say

worthy
those

play

started

a little
unkindness

- 42 Then in my head I drew right hastily,
And presently I leaned it out again,
And saw her walk, so very womanly,
With no one more, but only women twain.
Then did I study in myself and seyne
"Ha! sweetest are you sure a worldly creature,
Or truly heav'nly thing in form of nature?"
- 43 Or are you the god Cupid's own princéss,
And coming are to loose me out of band?
Or are you very nature the goddéis,
That has depainted with your heav'nly hand
This garden full of flowers, as they stand?
What shall I think, alas! what reverence
Shall I accord unto your excellence?
- 44 If you a goddess be, and if you like
To cause me pain, I may not it astart;
If you be worldly wight, that makes me sike,
Why did God make you so, my dearest heart,
To cause a hapless prisoner this smart,
Who loves you all, and nothing knows but woe?
And therefore mercy, sweet! since it is so."

- 45 When I a little time had made my moan,
 Bewailing my misfortune and my chance,
 Not knowing how or what was best to doon, do
 So far I fallen had into love's dance,
 That suddenly my wits, my countenance,
 My heart, my will, my nature, and my mind,
 Were changéd clean right to another kind.
- 46 Of her array the form if I should write,
 To wit her golden hair and rich attire
 In fretwise trimmed and set with pearls so white
 And balas rubies sparkling as the fire,
 With many an emerald and fair sapphire ;
 And on her head a chaplet fresh of hue,
 Of plumes part coloured red, and white, and blue ;
- 47 And full of quiv'ring spangles bright as gold,
 Fashioned in shape like to the amorétts, love knots
 So new, so fresh, so pleasant to behold,
 The plumes eke like unto the flow'r-jonétts, St. John's wort
 Others were shaped like to the round crokétts, curled tufts
 Besides all this, there was, as well I wot,
 Beauty enough to make a world to dote.

- 48 About her neck, white as the fire amaille, enamel
A goodly chain of small orfevery, goldsmith's work
Whereat there hung a ruby, without fail,
Like to a heart it shaped was verily,
That, as a spark of flame, so wantonly
Seemed burning bright upon her snowy throat ;
A partner good she'd make, full well I wot !
- 49 And for to walk that shining fresh May morrow,
A hook she had upon her tissue white,
That goodlier had not been seen to-forrow, before
As I suppose ; and girt she was a lyte ; a little
Thus partly loose for haste, of such delight
It was to see her youth in gudelihead, beauty
To rudeness save, to speak thereof I dread.
- 50 In her was beauty, youth, and humble port,
And bounty, riches, womanly factúre, mien
God better wot than pen of mine report :
Wisdom, largess, estate, discretion sure
In ev'ry point so guided her mesúre, conduct
In word, in deed, in shape, in contenance, demeanour
That nature could no more her child advance.

51 Through which anon I knew and understood,
That she a mortal was this bright creature ;
On whom to rest my eyes, so much of good
It did my woful heart, I you assure,
That it was to me joy without measure ;
And, at the last, my eyes unto the heaven
I threw forthwith, and said these verses seven :— lines seven

52 " O Venus clear ! O goddess stellified !
To whom I homage yield and sacrifice,
From this day forth your grace be magnified,
That me receivéd has in such a wise,
To underlive your law and do servicé ;
Now help me forth, and of your mercy lead
My heart to rest that nearly dies for dread."

53 When I with good intent this orison
Thus ended had, I paused a little stound ; while
And oft mine eyes full piteously a-down
I cast, beholding keen her little hound,
That with his bells disported on the ground ;
Then would I say, and sigh therewith a lyte, a little
" Ah ! well were he that now were in thy plight ! " place

- 54 Another while the little nightingale,
That sat upon the branches, would I chide,
And say right thus ; “ now where are thy notes smale, small
That thou of love hast sung this morrow-tide ?
See'st thou not her that sittest thee beside ?
For Venus' sake, the blissful goddess clear,
Sing on again, and make my lady cheer.
- 55 And eke I pray, for all the anguish great,
For love of thy own sister, Procne, dear,
Thou bore at one time, when thy bosom wet
With the warm trickling tears of thine eyes clear,
All bloody ran ; that pity was to hear
The cruelty of that unknighly deed,
When was from thee bereft thy maiden hede.
- 56 Lift up thy heart, and sing with good intent ;
And in thine own sweet notes the treason tell,
Was to thy sister, true and innocent,
Told truthless by her husband false and fell ;
For whose guilt, as it worthy is and well,
Rebuke those husbands that are false, I say,
And bid them mend, in twenty devil way.

- 57 O little wretch, alas ! dost thou not see
Who, yonder, comes ? Is it now time to wring ? lament ; wring
What sorry thought has fallen upon thee ? [the hands
Open thy throat ; hast thou no wish to sing ?
Alas ! since thou of reason had feeling,
Sweet little bird say once unto me ' peep ;'
I die of woe ; methinks thou'rt gone to sleep.
- 58 Hast thou no mind of love ? Where is thy make ? mate
Or art thou sick, or smit with jealousy ?
Or is she dead, or hath she thee forsake ?
What is the cause of thy meláncholý,
That thou no more dost make thy melody ?
Sluggard, for shame ! lo here thy golden hour,
Is worth as much as all thy life's labóur !
- 59 If thou shouldst sing well ever in thy life,
Now is, in faith, the time, and eke the space :
What ails thee then ? some bird may come and strive
In song with thee, and mastery purcháse. obtain
Shouldst thou then cease, It were great shame, alláce ! alas
And here, to win the prize may hap for ever,
Here is the time to sing,—or now, or never."

- 60 I thought me thus, If I my hands but clap,
Or something cast, then will she fly away ;
And if I hold my peace, then will she nap ;
And if I cry, she'll wot not what I say :
Thus, what is best, I do not know this day :
“ But blow wind, blow, and make the leaves to shake,
Some twig may wag, and make her start awake.”
- 61 With that at once she right took up a song,
When came anon more birds and did alight,
And then, to hear the mirth was them among,
Besides that too, to see the pleasant sight
Of her sweet form, my spirit was so light,
Methought I flew for joy without arrest,
So were my senses taken captive fest. securely
- 62 And to the woodnotes of the philomene, nightingale
Which then she sang, this ditty there I made
To Her who was of my affections queen,
For, wanting whom, no songs can make me glade ; happy
So to that saint there walking in the shade,
My prayers thus, with humble heart entere, entirely
Devoutly then I said in this manère :— manner

63 "When will your mercy turn towards your man, lover
 Whose service is as yet unknown to you?
Since, when you go away, nought left is then:
 But, heart! although my body can't get through, the prison
 Follow thy heav'n! who should be glad but thou [bars
That to pursue such guide hast undertake? undertaken
Were it to death, the way don't thou forsake!"

64 And after this, the birds did ev'ry one
 Take up another song full loud and clear,
And with one voice said:—"Well we have begun,
 That with our mates we are together here;
 We preen and play without doubt and dangere, disturbance
Clothed all in suits alike full fresh and new,
To love devoted, busy, glad, and true.

65 And you, fresh May, aye merciful to brides,
 Now welcome be ye, flower of months all;
For naught except your grace upon us bides,
 And all the world to witness this we call,
 That scattered has so plainly over all
With new and fresh and sweet and tender green,
Our life, our joy, our governor, our queen."

- 66 This was their song, as seemed to me full heye, loud
 With many unknown notes both sweet and shrill,
And therewithall that Fair One up her eye
 Would cast among, as it were the gods' will,
 Where I might see, standing alone full still,
That form, so fair, which nature's mastery
Had in her visage wrought so lovingly.
- 67 And, after she had walked a little thraw while
 Under the shady sweet green branches bent,
Her fair fresh face, as white as any snaw, snow
 She turned aside, and forth her way she went ;
 And then began my sickness and torment,
To see her part, and follow not I might ;
Methought the day converted into night.
- 68 Then said I thus, " Whereunto live I longer ?
 Wofullest wight, and subject unto pain ;
Of pains ? no : I say yea : for they no stronger
 May any one afflict, I dare well seyne. say
 How may this be, that death and life, both twain,
Should both at once in any mortal creature
Together dwell, and thus torment his nature ?

- 72 The livelong day thus did I pry and pore,
Till Phoebus ended had his beams so bright,
And bade farewell to ev'ry leaf and flow'r,
That is to say, approaching was the night,
And Hesperus his lamps began to light ;
When in the window, still as any stone,
I stayed awhile, and, kneeling, made my moan.
- 73 So until eve, for lack of might and mind,
I sore complained and wept eke piteously,
By sorrow so upset were heart and mind,
That to the chilly stone my head awry
I laid, and leaned, perplexéd verily,
Half sleeping and half swooning, in such wise :
That what I dreamt I will you now advise.
- 74 Methought that thus all suddenly a light
In at the window came whereat I leant,
With which the chamber window shone full bright,
And all my body so it overwent,
That of my sight the virtue whole i-blent ; became blinded
And then withal a voice unto me said,
" I bring thee joy and health, be not afraid."

- 75 And forth anon the light passed suddenly,
Where it had entered, the same way again,
And soon, methought, forth at the door in hie haste
I went my way, me nothing did restrain ;
And hastily, by both of the arms twain,
I was high lifted up into the air,
Caught in a cloud of crystal clear and fair.
- 76 Ascending upward aye from sphere to sphere,
Through air, through water, then through flaming fire,
Until I came unto the circle clear
Of Signifere, where fair, and bright, and schire, shining
The signs shone out ; and in the glad empire
Of blissful Venus, where one shouted now announced his
So suddenly, I wist not almost how. [arrival
- 77 Of which the place, when as I came there nigh,
Was all, methought, of crystal stones i-wroght, built
And to the port I lifted was in hie, quickly
When suddenly, as one may say, as thought,
It opened, and I was anon in brought
Within a chamber, roomy, large, and fair ;
And there I found of people great repair.

- 78 That is to say, that present in that place
Methought I saw of ev'ry natiön
Lovers who ended had their mortal space term
In love's true service, many milliön,
And of whose chances is made mentiön
In diverse books, who wishes them may see ;
And therefore here their names I will let be.
- 79 The whose adventures and their great labouirs
Above their heads were written there I fand ; found
These martyrs, so to say, and confessörs,
Each in his rank, and his mate in his hand ;
And therewith all these people saw I stand,
With many a grave and solemn countenance,
As in degree Love chose them to advance.
- 80 And some good folk that fair in love befill, befell
There saw I sitting by themselves alone
With hoary heads ; and with them stood Goodwill
To talk and play ; and after that anon
Beside these folk and next there saw I gone walking about
Courage, amongst those that were fresh and young,
And with them played full merrily and sung. sang

- 81 And in another rank, along the wall,
 There saw I stand, in caps both wide and long,
 A full great number ; but their hoods were all,
 I wist not why, across their faces hung ;
 And aye to them Repentance came among,
 And made them cheer, disguised in his weed :
 And downward after that I yet took heed ;
- 82 That right athwart the chamber there was draw drawn
 A curtain thin and white, all of pleasance, beautiful
 The which behind, all standing there I saw
 A world of folk, and by their countenance
 Their hearts were sad and full of displeasance, unhappiness
 Petitions in their hands, of one assent in similar terms
 Their plaints unto the judge then to present.
- 83 And thereupon was audible to me
 A voice, which said :—" Take heed man and behold :
 Yonder thou see'st the highest stage and 'gree rank
 Of aged folk, whose heads are hoar and old ;
 These are the folk that never alter wold would
 In love, but truly servéd him alway,
 In ev'ry age, unto their ending day.

- 84 They from their very youth did understand
That faithfulness alone could hearts secure ;
And none in life e'er took so much in hand
For virtue's sake, nor longer did endure
In service of true love ; I you assure.
For, from their youth when first they felt love's thrill,
Unto old age they never lacked good will.
- 85 Here also be of such as in councils
And all their deeds, were unto virtue true ;
Here princes are, who fought the great battlès,
In memory of whom are made books newe. enow
Here are the poets that all science knew,
Throughout the world, of love in their sweet lays,
As Ovid did, and Homer, in their days.
- 86 And after them down in a nearer stage,
Next where thou see'st the younger people play :
Lo ! these were they who, in their middle age,
True servants were to Love in many way,
And diversely they happenéd to deye ; die
Some full of grief, for lacking of their makes, mates
And some in arms for their fair ladies' sakes.

- 87 And others died by many diverse chance,
As happen folk each day as ye may see ;
Some of despair, without recoverance ;
Some of desire, o'ervaulting their degree ;
Some of despite and other enmity ;
Unkindness some without a reason why ;
Some of excess, and some of jealousy.
- 88 And after these, upon yon stage adown,
Those whom thou seest stand in caps so wide ;
They were whilom folk of religioun,
Who from the world their ways did closely hide,
Industriously they worked on ev'ry side
Without display, with spirit and with goods.
And lo ! so modestly they hang their hoods :
- 89 And though that they were hardy at essay,
And did much service whilom privily,
Yet in the world's esteem it seeméd nay ;
Their willing deeds were done so quietly :
They did not choose to work them openly,
Yet, notwithstanding, they need repenting,
And so their hoods they o'er their faces hing.

hang

- 90 And seest thou yon multitude, in row
 Standing, behind the curtain of delight ?
Some are of those who holden were full low,
 Coerced by friends, and nothing they to wyte, blame
 In youth from love into the cloister quite ;
And for that cause they come are reconciled, minds made up
Them to accuse who had them so beguiled.
- 91 And others were amongst them there alsó,
 That come are to the court, on Love to 'plain,
For he had circumstances ordered so,
 Whereat their hearts repinéed them ageyne, against
 For which, in all their days, and sooth to seyne, say
While others lived in joy and in plesánce, happiness
Their lives were not but care and repentánce ;
- 92 And where their hearts imparted were and set,
 Conjoined with others that could not accord ;
Thus were they wronged who had done no forfet, fault
 Them sundering that never would discord ;
 Of youthful ladies fair, and many lord,
That thus by mastery from their choice driv, driven
Full ready their complaints were there to give."

- 93 And others too I saw complaining there
Fortune upon and her great variánce,
And where in love they paired right pleasant were,
To their sweet partners coupled in plesánce, felicity
She suddenly did cause their severance,
And them removed from this world's company,
Without a cause,—there was no reason why.
- 94 And in a chair of state was there beside,
With shiny wings, all plumed, except his face,
There saw I sitting the blind god Cupid,
With bow in hand, that bent full ready was ;
And by him hung three arrows in a case,
Of which the heads were ground full sharp and right,
Of metals various fashioned fair and bright.
- 95 And with the first, that headed was with gold,
He softly smites, and that has easy cure ;
The second was of silver, manifold
Worse than the first, and harder to endure ;
The third, of steel, is shot without a cure ;
And on his yellow locks so long and sheen
A chaplet had he, all of leaves so green.

- 96 In a retreat that small was of compáse, size
With sighs depicted wonderfully sad,
These were not sighs such as do hearts menáce, vex
But such as make true lovers to be glad,
I Venus found upon her bed, who had
A mantle cast across her shoulders white :
Thus vestéd was the goddess of delight.
- 97 Stood at the door Fair-calling, her ushér,
That could his office do in skilful wise,
And Secrecy, her careful chamberer,
That busy was in time to do service,
And others more I cannot you advice ;
And on her head, of roses red full sweet,
A chaplet she did wear, fair, fresh, and meet.
- 98 With quaking heart astonished at that sight,
Then scarcely wist I what that I should seyne ; say
But at the last and feebly as I might,
My hands on both my knees I placed them twain,
And of my cares began I to complain ;
With humble air and lamentable chiere countenance
Saluted I that goddess bright and clear :

99 "High queen of love ! star of benevolence !

Princess of pity, planet merciable !

Appeaser of ill will and violence !

By the pure virtue of your aspects able,

Unto your grace let now be acceptable

My poor request, that can no further gone

go

To ask assistance, but to you alone !

100 As ye who are the succour and sweet well

Of remedy, of anxious hearts the cure,

And, in the huge waves weltering and fell

Of love's excitement, haven blest and sure ;

O helm and anchor of our adventure,

Ye have your man with his good will conquest :

conquered

Then, mercy show, and bring his heart to rest !

101 Ye know the cause of all my troubles smart

Better than I, and all my adventure

Ye can conduct, and as you choose, convert

The hardest heart formed ever by nature :

Since wholly in your power lies my cure,

Have pity now, O blissful bright goddess,

On your poor man, and look on his distress !

102 And though I was to all your statutes strange,
By ignorance, and not by felony,
And if your grace be willing now to change
My pliant heart, to serve you constantly,
Forgive all this, and shape a remedy
To gain my cause by your benignant grace,
Or may I die forthwith in this same place.

103 And with the streamers of your piercing light
Convey my heart that is so woe begone,
Again unto that sweet and heavenly sight,
That I within the walls as cold as stone,
So sweetly saw this morning walk and gone, stroll
Low in the garden, right before mine eye :
Now, mercy, Queen ! allow me not to die."

104 These words expressed, my spirit in despair,
A while I ceased, awaiting for her grace :
And thereupon her crystal eyes so fair
She cast aside, and after that a space,
Benignantly she turnéd has her face
Towards myself full pleasantly conveyed ;
And unto me right in this wise she said :—

- 105 "Young man, the cause of all your inward sorrow
Is not unknown unto my deity,
And your request, both now and eke to-forowe, formerly
When you first made profession unto me ;
Since of my grace I have inspiréd thee
To know my law, continue forth, for oft,
There when I aim full sore, I smite but soft.
- 106 Then patiently take thou thine auentúre, fortune
So wills son Cupid, and the same do I,
He can thee smite, to me belongs the cure
When I see time, and now therefore humbly
Abide, and serve, and let Good-hope thee gye : guide
Seeing I have yourself now here présent,
I will thee shew yet more of my intent.
- 107 That is to say, though it to me pertain
In laws of love the sceptre to govérn,
The consequences of my own beams sheen
Their aspects have by ordinance eterne, eternal
But join with other Planets to discern
All future things and matters that have gone,
To me belongs not to direct alone ;

- 108 As in thine own case now thou mayest see,
For lo ! by other Planets' influence
Thy person standeth not in liberty ;
Therefore, though I give thee benevolence,
It doth not stand yet in my advertence,
Till certain courses ended be and run,
And from the Princess thou hast favour won.
- 109 And yet, considering the nakedness,
Alike thy wit, thy person, and thy might,
They are no match, in their unworthiness,
To her high birth, estate, and beauty bright :
As like ye be, as day is to the night ;
Or sackcloth is unto fine cremesýe ; crimson cloth
Or is the dock unto the fresh daisý.
- 110 Unlike as is the moon to sunny sheen ;
Or January is unlike to May ;
Unlike the cuckoo to the Philomene ; nightingale
Their tabards are not both of like array ;
As like the crow is to the popinjay ;
As like, in goldsmith's work, a fish's eye
To cope with pearl, it cannot rank so high.

- 111 As I have mentioned, unto me belongs
Especially the cure of thy sicknéss ;
But now thy matter so in balance hangs,
That it requireth, for its sure success,
The help of others more that be goddés, goddesses
And have in them the power and the lore,
In this affair with which to cure thy sore.
- 112 That thou may'st see that fully I intend,
To help thee on, thy welfare to preserve,
Immediately thy spirit will I send
On to the goddess who is called Minerve,
And see that her behests thou well conserve,
For in this case she may be thine ally,
And put your heart to rest, as well as I.
- 113 And since the way unknown is unto thee,
Where that her dwelling is and her sojourn,
I will that Good-hope servant to thee be,
The friend of all, with whom no cause to mourn,
He shall thee lead and guide till thou return,
And pray Minerva, that she, in thy need,
Her counsel give for welfare and for speed.

114 And that she will, as falls to her office,
Be thy good lady, help and counsellór,
And to thee shew her ripe and good advice,
By which thou may'st, by patience and labóur,
Attain unto that glad and golden Flow'r,
That thou would'st have so fain with all thy heart.
And furthermore, see thou her servant art.

115 When thou descendest unto earth again,
Say to the men that be there resident,
How long think they to hold me in disdain,
That of my laws they be so negligent
From day to day, and will they not repent,
But break out loose, and scamper off at large?
Is there not even one of them gives charge? heed

116 Because the rage," quoth Venus, "and the smart
Of their unkindliness do so constrain,
My womanly and woful tender heart,
That then I weep ; and as a token plain,
It is my tears that causeth all the rain,
That ye see on the earth so heavy beat
From day to day, my anguish is so great.

- 117 And when I weep, and cease another while,
For patience that is in my womanhede,
Then all my wrath and rancour I exile ;
And from the crystal tears that I have shed,
The honey blossoms grow apace and spread,
That pray to men, as in their flowers' wise ;
Be true in love, and honour my service.
- 118 And eke, in token of this piteous tale,
When so my tears are dropping on the ground,
As is their wont the feathered songsters smale small
Their singing cease, and murmur for that stound, time-being
And all the shining lights in heaven round
For my deep grief have such compaciencie, sympathy
That from the earth they cover their presence.
- 119 Again, in further token of this thing,
When flowers spring, and freshest be of hue,
And when the birds upon the branches sing,
At that time aye do folk begin renew
That service unto Love, that aye is due,
Which commonly has aye his observance,
And of their former sloth have repentance.

120 Thus may'st thou say, my influences great,
Unto the which they aught to give most weye, weight
No light offence, through sloth to all forget :
And therefore in this wise unto them say,
As I thee here have bidden, and convey
The matter all the better 'tofore said ;
Thus is my charge on thee most strictly laid.

121 Say also, is it proper this, for shame !
The new songs, the fresh carols, and the dance,
The life of pleasure, changes oft of game,
The fresh array, the lusty countenance,
The busy throngs, the hearty observánce,
That formerly amongst them were so rife ?
Bid them repent in time, and mend their life :

122 Or I shall, with my father old Satúrn,
And with the whole celestial alliańce,
Our countenance from them withdraw and turn,
That all the world shall wail their governánce. conduct
Bid them be timely with their repentánce,
And with their hearts again observe my law ;
And I my hand from striking shall withdraw.

- 126 And straight into the presence suddenly
Of dame Minerva, mild and grave goddés,
Good-hope my guide conveyed me readily ;
To whom anon, with proper humbleness,
My visit and its cause I did express,
And all the matter whole, unto the end,
Of Venus' charge, as pleaséd her to send.
- 127 Of which right thus her answer was in brief :
"My son, I have well heard, and understand,
As you rehearse, the nature of thy grief,
Thou would'st thy quest procure, and also fond find
For thy distress some comfort at my hand,
By counsel of thy lady Venus clear,
To be with her thy help in this mattér.
- 128 But in this case thou shalt well know and wit,
Thou mayest ground thy heart in such a wise,
That all thy labours may be little quit ; requited
But thou may'st set it in another guise,
That will be to thee honour great and prise, praise
And if thou wilt unto that way incline,
I shall give thee my lore and discipline.

129 Lo! my good son, this is as much as seyne, to say
That if thy love is all set utterly
On vain desire, thy labour is in vain ;
And so the end will turn of thy folly
To pain and to repentance ; wot thou why ?
If thou wilt not on love thy virtue set,
Such course will be the cause of thy forfeit. loss

130 Take Him the first in all thy governance,
Who in his hand the fate has of you all,
And pray that His directing providence,
Thy love may guide, and on Him trust and call,
Who corner stone and ground is of the wall,
That never fails, and trust Him without dread,
And to thy purpose soon He will thee lead.

131 For lo! the building that is founded sure,
May better bear a course and higher be,
Than otherwise, and longer will endure,
By many times, this may thy reason see,
And stronger to defy adversity :
Build, therefore, thou thy work, upon that stone,
And thy desire shall forward with thee gone go

- 132 Be true, and meek, and steadfast in thy thought,
And prompt the lady's favour to procure,
Not only in thy word, for word is naught,
Unless thy work and all thy busy cure care
Accord thereto ; and if done by measure, wisely
In place, in hour, in manner, and in wise,
She doubtless will acknowledge thy service.
- 133 All things have times, thus says Ecclesiaste ; Ecc. iii. 1
And well is he his time that will abide : await
Abide thy time, for he who is in haste,
Comes little speed, the wise man hath it writ ;
And oft good fortune blossoms with good wit ;
Therefore, if thou wilt aye be well fortunéd,
Let wisdom always to thy wish be joined.
- 134 But there be many of so brittle sort,
That feign the truth in love a little while,
And setting all their wits and their disport, pleasures
The weak confiding woman to beguile,
And so to win their purpose with a wile ;
Such feigned pretensions are but treachery,
Under the cover of hypocrisy.

- 135 For as the fowler whistleth in his throat
In diverse ways, to imitate the brid, bird
And feigns, to suit, a sweet or grating note
Which in the bush by his deceit is hid,
Till she is locked secure his net amid ;
Right so the traitor, the false thief, I say,
With treason sweet oft winneth thus his way.
- 136 Fie on all such ! fie on their doubleness !
On their desire and beastly appetite !
Their wolfish hearts, disguised in lamb's likenéss ;
Their black designs, hid under language white ;
Fie on the labour, fie on their delight !
That feigning outwardly to her honóur,
But in their hearts her virtue would devour.
- 137 So hard it is to credit now-a-days
The world, it is so false and inconstánt,
The truth of which is shown in many ways ;
More pity 'tis ; for which the remanánt, others
Who purpose well and are not variant,
For others guilt suspected of untruth,
And suffer oft, and truly this is ruth. pity

138 But if thy heart be grounded firm and stable
In God's own law, thy purpose to attain,
Thy labour is to me right agreeable ;
And my full help, with counsel true and plain,
I shall thee shew, and this is for certàin ;
Open thy heart, therefore, and let me see
If thy relief be pertinent to me."

139 "Madam," said I, "since it is your pleasance
That I declare the kind of my loving,
Truly and good, and without variance,
I love that Flower above all other thing ;
And would be he that in her honouring
Might well succeed, by Him who died on rood,
And nothing spare in labour, life, or good. goods

140 And, furthermore, as touching the nature
Of my desire, to honour or to blame,
I dare well say, and therein me assure,
For any gold, that any one can name,
I'm not the one that would of her good fame
Be blemisher in any point or wise
For weal or woe, while my life may suffice. last

- 141 This is the true effect of my intent,
 Touching the happiness that smarts me sore,
If this be fault, I cannot it repent,
 Although my life I forfeit should therefore,
 Minerva blest, I cannot say you more ;
But so much does desire my wits compáce, encompass
I have no joy on earth but in your grace."
- 142 "Desire," quoth she, " I will not it deny,
 If thou it ground and set in christian wise ;
And therefore, son, reveal thy heart plainly."
 "Madam," said I, "'tis true without fantise, dissembling
 Or that day never come that I may rise,
My wish is all to covet the pleasánce, opportunity
That may her fancy put into balánce. to trial
- 143 Above all things, lo ! this were my gladnéss,
 To see the blooming beauty of her face ;
And if I be rewarded, by procéss, in due time
 For my great love and truth, to stand in grace,
 Her honour safe, lo ! this the blissful case
That I would ask, and thereunto attend,
For greatest joy unto life's utmost end."

- I44 "Now well," Minerva said, "since it is so,
In virtue all thy love is set with truth,
To help thee on I shall be one of tho
That heartily, henceforth, and without sloth,
That she who has thy heart may shew her ruth
For thy distress ; and I shall pray full fair
That Fortune be no more thereto contrair.
- I45 For sooth it is, that all of you creatúres,
Who under us possess your earthly dwelling,
Receiving diversely your aventúres, lots
Of which the ordering and chiefest melling directing
To Fortune appertains, without repelling, disputing
For she alone does hold the chances two
In hand, both of your weal and of your woe.
- I46 And how is it as certain authors treat,
That all your lots are sure arranged before
High in the heavens, by whose power great
Impelled ye are to action less or more,
There in the world, thus calling that therefore
' Fortune,' and so that the diversity
Of their effects comes by necessity ; fore-ordination

- 147 And other writers hold, that ev'ry man
 Has in himself the choice and liberty
 To make his lot befall, or how, or when,
 As he likes best, and no necessity fore-ordination
 Was in the heavens at his nativity,
 But that all things do happen in commúne ordinary course
 By his own purpose, so calls them 'fortune.'
- 148 And where a person has before knowing knows before hand
 Of that which is to happen purposely,
 Lo! fortune is but weak in such a thing,
 Thou may'st well know, and hear example why ;
 To God, who is the great first cause only
 Of ev'ry thing, there may no fortune fall :
 The reason why? for He foreknoweth all.
- 149 And therefore thus I say to this sentéce ; opinion
 Fortune is most and strongest evermore,
 Where least foreknowledge or intelligence
 Is in the man, and, son, of wit and lore
 Since thou art weak and feeble, lo! therefore,
 Thou art the more in danger and commúne dependent on
 With her, whom learned clerks do call 'Fortúne.'

150 But for the sake, and at the reverence
Of Venus clear, as I thee told before,
I have for thy distress compacience ; sympathy
And in relief and comfort of thy sore,
I herewith give thee my advice therefore ;
Ask Fortune's help, for most unlikely things
Full often, suddenly, about she brings.

151 Now go thy way, and have great mind upon
What I have said in way of thy doctrine." instruction
"Madam, I shall," said I ; and right anon
I took my leave :—as straight as any line,
Within a beam, that from that land divine
Minerva, piercing through the sky, extended,
To earth again my spirit is descended.

152 Where, in a verdant plain, I took my way,
Along a river, pleasant to behold,
Which bordered was with flowers fresh and gay,
And, o'er the gravel, bright as any gold,
The crystal water ran so clear and cold,
That, in mine ear made continually
A pleasant sound, of sweetest harmony ;

- 153 That full of little fishes by the brim,
Now here, now there, with backs as blue as lead,
They leaped and played, and in a shoal did swim
So prettily, and 'dressed themselves to spread
Their coral fins, like to the ruby red,
That in the sun their scales so clear and bright
Like coats of mail aye glittered in my sight :
- 154 And near to this same river side below,
Found I a highway, like as it had been, as it were
On which, on ev'ry side, a lengthened row
Of trees saw I, all clad in leafage green,
And full of fruit delightful to be seen,
And also, as it came into my mind,
Of beasts saw I, of many diverse kind :
- 155 The lion king, his mate the lioness ;
The panther, like unto the smaragdine ; smaragdite
The little squirrel, full of business
The patient ass, the drudging beast of pyne ; toil
The funny ape ; the warlike porcupine ;
The sharp eyed lynx ; the lover unicorn,
That venom scatters with his iv'ry horn.

156 There saw I newly issued from his haunt
The fiery tiger, full of felony ;
The dromedare ; the stately elephant ;
The wily fox, the widow's enemy ;
The climbing goat ; the elk for alblastry ; shields, etc.
The listening boar ; the badger good for hurts ; its grease
The hare besides, that oft goes to the worts.

157 The stalwart ox, that draws with his horns great ;
The martin, sable, fougart, many mo ;
The chalk-white ermine, tail tipped like the jet ;
The royal hart, the cony, and the roe ;
The wolf, that of his murders ne'er cries " ho !"
The skilful beaver, and the rav'ning bear ;
For camelot, the camel full of hair ;

158 With many other beasts diverse and strange,
That do not come at present to my mind.
But now to purpose,—straight on through the range
I held my way, revolving in my mind
Whence I had come, and where that I should find
The goddess, Fortune ; unto whom in hie speedily
Good-hope, my guide, did lead me suddenly ;

159 And at the last, observing it aside,
A round apartment walled in have I found ;
In midst where very soon I have espied
The goddess, Fortune, stationed on the ground ;
And right before her feet, of compass round,
A wheel, on which then clambering I sye
A multitude of folk before mine eye.

160 An ample surcoat she had on that tide,
 Appearing unto me of diverse hues,
 Each time that she would turn herself aside,
 This goddess stood, of fortune and of glews ; chances
 A chaplet, too, with many fresh anews, gewgaws
 She had upon her head ; and with this hung
 A mantle on her shoulders, large and long,

161 That furréd was with ermine snowy white,
All dotted with the same in spots so blake : black
And sometimes in her countenance a lyte a little
Gloomy she was ; and then soon it would slake,
And suddenly her manner smiling make,
When she was pleased ; for equal countenance
She held not, but was aye in variance.

- 162 And underneath the wheel I saw right there
 An ugly pit, as deep as any well,
That to behold thereon I quaked for fear ;
 I heard but one thing, that who therein fell
 Came no more up again, to tidings tell ;
Of which, astonished at that fearful sight,
I wist not what to do, so great my fright.
- 163 And then to see the sudden weltering
 Of that same wheel, that slipp'ry was to hold,
It seemed unto my wit a wondrous thing,
 So many saw I that then clamber wold, would
 And lost their footing, and to ground were rolled ;
And others too, that sat above on high,
Were overthrown in twinkling of an eye.
- 164 And on the wheel a little empty space,
 Well near o'erstraight from lowest point to high ;
They wary were that long sat on that place,
 So quickly jolted she the wheel awry ;
 There was much climbing, then right downward hie.
And some of them that fallen had so sore,
To climb again they courage had no more.

165 I also saw that, whereas some were slung,
By whirling of the wheel, unto the ground,
That Fortune had them suddenly up flung,
And set thereon again full safe and sound :
And I saw ever a new swarm abound,
That thought to upward climb upon the wheel,
Instead of them that might no longer reel.

166 And at the last, in presence of them all
That stood about, she summoned me by name ;
And therewith on my knees began I fall
Saluting suddenly, abashed for shame ;
And, smiling thus, she said to me in game ;
“What dost thou here? who has thee hither sent?
Say on at once, and tell me thine intent.

167 I see well, by thy look and countenance,
There is some matter lies upon thy heart,
It stands not with thee as thou would'st, perchance.”
“Madam,” quoth I, “for love is all the smart
That I feel ever, lengthwise and athwart ;
Help, of your grace, me woful wretched wight,
Since me to cure you power have and might.”

168 "What help," quoth she, "would'st thou that I ordain,
For thee to bring unto thy heart's desire?"

"Madam," quoth I, "just that your grace may deign,
Of your great might, my wisdom to inspire,
To win the well that slaken may the fire
In which I burn, ah! Goddess Fortunáte!
Help now my game, so near the point to mate."

169 "To mate?" quoth she, "O! very simple wretch,

I see well by thy deadly colour pale,
Thou art too feeble of thyself to stretch
Upon my wheel, to clamber or to hale
Without some help, for thou hast found a stale prison
For many years, for lack of Fate's good will,
And of thy very heart thou want'st the hele. health

170 Well may'st thou be a wretched mortal called,

That want'st the comfort should'st thy heart make glade;
And hast all things within thy heart installed, [glad
That may thy youth discourage and defade.
Though thy beginning has been retrograde,
By false opponents till thou art aspert, exasperated
Now shall they turn, and fall into the dirt."

- 171 And thereupon unto the wheel in hye quickly
 She did me lead, and bade me learn to climb,
Upon the which I mounted suddenly.
 “Now hold thy grip,” quoth she, “for thy lifetime,
 An hour and more it has run over prime ;
To count the whole, the half is near away ;
Spend, therefore, well, the remnant of thy day. life
- 172 Example take,” quoth she, “from them before,
 That from my wheel have tumbled like a ball ;
The nature of it is for evermore,
 After a rise, to slip and give a fall,
 Thus, as I wish, they mount or downward sprawl.
Farewell,” quoth she, and by the ear me took
So earnestly, that therewith I awoke.
- 173 O restless soul ! aye flick’ring to and fro,
 That never art in quiet nor in rest,
Till to that place you came from, back you go,
 Which is thy first and very proper nest :
 From day to day so sore here art thou drest, treated
That in the flesh, when waking, art in trouble,
And sleeping too ; of pain so hast thou double.

- 174 Toward myself all this I mean to loke, apply
For sore my soul was harassed just before,
By idle dreams, then soon as I awoke,
By twenty fold I was in trouble more,
Bethinking me with sighing heart and sore,
That I no other thing than visions had,
Assurance none, my spirit to make glad.
- 175 I presently addressed myself to rise,
Quite full of thought, pain and adversity ;
And to myself I said upon this wise ;
Ah ! mercy, Lord ! what wilt thou do with me ?
What life is this ? where could my spirit be ?
Is this of thought a mere impressión,
Or is it from the heav'n a visión ?
- 176 Now if ye gods, of your kind providence,
Have shewed me this for my recomforting,
In relaxation of my sore penánce,
I you beseech full humbly of this thing,
That of your grace I might have tokening,
If it shall be as in my sleep before
Ye shewéd have : and without musing more.

177 In haste unto the window did I walk,
Moving within my spirit of this sight,
Where quick a turtle-dove as white as chalk,
So evenly upon my hand did light,
And unto me she turned herself full right,
And cheered my spirit in her bird's apart manner
Which gave my heart beginning of comfort.

178 This friendly bird right in her bill did hold
Red gilly flowers with their stalks so green
A goodly branch, where written was with gold,
On ev'ry list, with flourishes I ween
Proportioned fair, full pleasant to be seen,
A sentence plain, which, as I could devise,
And have in mind, said right upon this wise :—

179 "Awake ! awake ! I bring, lover, I bring
Glad news to thee, which blissful be and sure
For thy relief ; now laugh, and play, and sing,
Thou art so near a happy aventure ; event
For in the heaven appointed is the cure ;"
And unto me the bird the flow'rs present :
With pinions spread ; away forthwith she went.

180 Which up anon I took, and as I guess,
 A hundred times, before I farther went,
I did it read, with heart full of gladnéss ;
 And, half with hope, and half with fear, it hent, took
 And at my bed's head, with a good intent,
I did securely pin it up, and this
First token was of all my joy and bliss.

181 This token truly after, day by day,
 That all my wits had mastered heretofore,
From this time forth my pains it chased away.
 And shortly, so well Fortune has her bore, borne
 To quicken truly day by day my lore,
That to my freedom come I am again,
To bliss with Her who is my sovereign. queen

182 But forasmuch as some may think or seyne, say
 What needeth me, upon so little even,
To write all this ? I answer this again,—
 Who that from dangers dire had reached a haven,
 Would stop at one thank ? he'd give six or seven :
Each one has his own happiness or sore
Most in his mind : I cannot say you more.

183 Eke who may in this life have more plesánce joy
Than those just freed from thraldom and from pain,
By the assistance of Love's ordinance,
That has so many in his golden chain?
Who hopes to win his bosom's sovereign,
Would censure me for writing this, let see!
Sufficient now is my felicity.

184 Beesching unto Venus fair above,
For all my brethren that are in this place,
That is to say, who servants are to Love,
And from their ladies can no thank purcháse,
Their pain relieve, and grant them of your grace,
To be successful, and be forthwith eased;
So reason and the ladies both be pleased:

185 And eke for them that are not entered in
The dance of love, but thither on their way,
In proper time and bashful to begin
Their 'prenticeship. And furthermore, I pray
For them that passéd have the many fray adventures
That are in love, and reached to full plesánce, satisfaction
To grant them all, lo! good perseveránce:

- 186 And eke I pray for all the mortals dull,
 Who, living here in sloth and ignorance,
Have no true courage at the rose to pull,
 Their lives to quicken and their minds advance
 With their sweet lore, to bring them to good chance ;
And all who will not for this prayer turn,
When they would fainest speed, then may they spurn. stumble
- 187 To reckon ev'ry thing the circumstance,
 That happened me when lessen did the sore
Of my heart sickness, and my woful chance,
 It were too long, I let it stand therefóre.
 And thus this Flow'r, I cannot tell you more,
So heartily has to my help attended,
That from the death her man she has defended. set him at liberty
- 188 And mercifully eke the gods working,
 For my long pain and service true in love,
And have me given wholly my asking,
 Which has my heart for ever set above
 In perfect joy, that nothing may remove,
But death : and of the gods in laud and prise praise
With thankful heart I say right in this wise :—

191 And thanks be to the massive castle wall,
From which I eagerly looked forth and leant.
Thanks also be to the saints marcial, of March
That brought about to me this accident. love adventure
May thanks be to the verdant branches bent,
Through which, and under, first it happened me
My heart's desire to see, and solaced be.

- 192 For to the presence sweet and delectable,
Right of this Flow'r that full is of plesánce,
By course of time, and by means favourable,
First of the blissful gods kind providence,
And then through long and true continuance
Of very faith in love and true service,
I come am, and shall further, by same wise. by her means
- 193 Unworthy, lo ! but only of Her grace,
In bond of love, that easy is and sure,
In recompense of my affection's space, endurance
She hath me taken, her sincere creature.
And thus befell my blissful adventure,
In youth of love, that now, from day to day,
Aye blooms anew, and will progress, I say.
- 194 Go little treatise, bare of eloquence,
Devoid of art and poor in ready wit ;
And pray the reader to have patience
Of thy defects, and kindly speak of it ;
And of his goodness thy shortcomings knit ;
Let him his tongue control and rather steer,
That all thy blemishes be covered here.

GOOD COUNSEL.

Since through virtue encreases dignity,
And virtue flower and root is of noblay, nobility
Of any weal or what estate thou be,
Its steps pursue and dread thee none effray : terror
Exile all vice and follow truth alway :
Love most thy God, who first thy love began,
And for each inch He will thee quit a span.

Be not too proud in thy prosperity,
For as it comes so will it pass away ;
Thy time to count is short thou may well see,
For of green grass soon comes the withered hay.
Labour in truth while light is of the day.
Trust most in God, for he best guide thee can,
And for each inch He will thee quit a span.

Since word is thrall, and thought is only free,
Thou curb thy tongue, which power has and may ; might
Thou shut thine eyes from worldly vanity ;
Restrain thy will, and harken what I say ;
Grove ere thou slide, and creep forth on the way ;
Thy promise keep unto thy God and man,
And for each inch He will thee quit a span.

x

